



Sewer System Overflow Public Notification Program Questions & Answers

Why is DHEC asking sewer systems to develop a Public Notification Program for overflows?

The public frequently asks DHEC about overflows and spills. Their questions include who's affected and what are the health risks.

Are we expected to issue a notice for every overflow?

No. The public notification process should begin for overflows of **5000 gallons or more or any overflow that has the potential to affect public health**. However, a notification program can include notifications for smaller overflows. For example, if an overflow is less than 5000 gallons, but occurs in a public park, it should be public noticed to ensure people are made aware to stay clear of the area until appropriate clean-up has been completed.

What should a notification program include?

Your program should contain basic information about who in your organization is responsible for issuing the notification; how you will determine the appropriate media to use for notifying the public, e.g. press release, door hangers, signs, etc; guidelines for determining the volume of the overflow; when the notification should go out; other agencies that may need to be copied on the notice; what information needs to be included in the notice; and who in your organization will answer questions from the public.

The attached template may be used as a guide in developing your program. If you have everything listed in the template, your program should meet the Department's criteria.

Will DHEC have to review our program?

Yes. DHEC wants to be sure the public notification process is relatively consistent across the state.

How soon are we expected to have a program developed?

You should be able to develop a notification program and submit it for concurrence within 30 days of receiving this information.

Who should develop a notification program?

Any utility or company that is currently expected to report a sewer system overflow should have a public notification program. This includes both public and private utilities.

What will happen if we don't develop a program?

DHEC will issue a public notification of a spill if one occurs in an area where a utility has chosen not to develop a program. In these cases, the Department may not have specific information and will have to issue a broad press release. The press release will include the responsible utility's contact information in the notice.

Contact Information: Glenn Trofatter, Director, SCDHEC Bureau of Water, Water Pollution Control Division, Phone: (803) 898-4300. Fax: (803) 898-4215.